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# Fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space: theme of the sessions of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and its Legal Subcommittee in 2018

**Note by the Secretariat**

## I. Introduction

1. At the fifty-second session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in 2015, the Working Group of the Whole of the Subcommittee considered the item on space technology for socioeconomic development in the context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the post-2015 development agenda.

2. In this context, the Working Group had before it a note by the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space entitled "2018 'UNISPACE+50' theme of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Legal Subcommittee and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space" (A/AC.105/C.1/2015/CRP.30).

3. The Working Group agreed to the main proposal by the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee and requested the Secretariat, in close consultation with the past, present and incoming chairs, to develop their proposal in further detail and present it for consideration by the Committee at its fifty-eighth session in June 2015 (see A/AC.105/1088, annex I, paras. 3 and 4).

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4. The Legal Subcommittee, at its fifty-fourth session, in 2015, considered the note by the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee entitled "2018 'UNISPACE+50' theme of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Legal Subcommittee and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space" (A/AC.105/C.2/2015/CRP.10).

5. The Subcommittee agreed to the main proposal put forward in that conference room paper and requested the Secretariat, in close consultation with the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee, to develop their proposal in further detail and to present it in the six official languages of the United Nations for consideration by the Committee at its fifty-eighth session, in June 2015, taking into account the recommendations made by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its fifty-second session contained in its report A/AC.105/1088, annex I, para. 4 (see A/AC.105/1090, paras. 233-234).

6. The present document, prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee, contains a more detailed proposal for consideration by the Committee at its fifty-eighth session, in 2015, as requested by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee at their respective sessions in 2015.

7. The present document contains some proposals for the preparatory work in the lead-up to the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in 2018 ("UNISPACE+50"), to be undertaken by the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat, the Committee, and the subsidiary bodies of the Committee. It also contains proposals that the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (UN-Space), under the leadership of the Office, align activities in the upcoming period leading to the "UNISPACE+50" thematic cycle of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies for 2018.

## II. Proposal presented by the past, present and incoming chairs of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

8. The first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE) was held in 1968. The year 2018 will mark its fiftieth anniversary, and this could be a fitting time to take stock of the contributions of the three UNISPACE conferences (UNISPACE I, held in 1968, UNISPACE II, held in 1982 and UNISPACE III, held in 1999) to global space governance. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and its Legal Subcommittee, supported by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, have, for the past 50 years, contributed extensively to the fostering of international cooperation in space activities at the international, regional, interregional and national levels for the benefit of all countries.

9. The fiftieth anniversary of the first UNISPACE conference is an opportunity to consider the current status and chart the future role of the Committee at a time when actors, both governmental and non-governmental, are increasingly getting involved in ventures to explore space and carry out space activities. It has been 16 years since UNISPACE III, which was, by all accounts, a success both substantively and organizationally. UNISPACE III was also the last United Nations global conference

of the previous millennium. Much has changed in the global space enterprise since the beginning of the twenty-first century, and it is appropriate for the global space community to take stock of what has been accomplished and what can be expected for the future, including by looking into the results of the multi-year review of the implementation of UNISPACE III (the "UNISPACE III+5" review).

10. The Committee, together with its subsidiary bodies and its secretariat, provides a unique platform at the global level. The interrelationship between major space-faring nations and emerging space nations, and the dialogue between them relating to increased international cooperation and capacity-building efforts for the benefit of developing countries, have laid the groundwork for success over the years. The space agenda is evolving and becoming more complex, not least because of the broader concept of space security and the expanding commercial space sector. The nature of space activities is evolving to meet those realities. The development of international mechanisms such as guidelines, codes and other confidence-building measures are reflective of this new environment.

11. Addressing challenges to humanity and sustainable development, protecting the space environment and securing the long-term sustainability of outer space activities all require further attention. The post-2015 development agenda will be adopted in 2015 with the establishment of new sustainable development goals, and this major target argues for stronger space governance and supporting structures at all levels, including improved spatial data infrastructure.

12. Since the beginning of the space age, international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space has evolved in such a way as to provide the impetus for a consideration of international mechanisms and infrastructures for space cooperation and coordination mechanisms at the international, regional, interregional and national levels. Against this background there could also be a consideration of ways and means for strengthening the role of the Office and the Committee within the United Nations system and the global space community.

13. Leading towards 2018 there will be a number of specific milestones in the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies where governance structures are addressed, inter alia:

(a) The General Assembly, at its seventieth session, in 2015, will hold a joint ad hoc meeting of the First and Fourth Committees on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has established procedures to study how those measures relate to the safety of space operations and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities in general;

(b) The tenth anniversary of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems will be commemorated in 2015;

(c) 2016 will mark the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER);

(d) The guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities are scheduled to be adopted in 2016;

(e) 2017 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty;

(f) The Legal Subcommittee multi-year agenda item on the review of international mechanisms for cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space concludes in 2017;

(g) The Space Mission Planning and Advisory Group and the International Asteroid Warning Network are being established as coordination mechanisms for addressing the near-Earth object impact threat;

(h) The workplan for the socioeconomic and sustainable development items of the Committee and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee concludes in 2018; and

(i) In 2014, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee established new working mechanisms for considering space weather and global health through dedicated expert groups.

14. In addition, the next International Space Exploration Forum is expected to take place in 2016 or 2017. In the summary of the 2014 Forum, the participants acknowledged that the Committee is an important venue for expanding humanity's horizons in space and that there is a need for discussion of international frameworks and common principles for collaboration in future space exploration.

15. It is clear that the format to mark "UNISPACE+50" requires a different and more simplified approach than that used for the past UNISPACE conferences due to the current nature of space affairs and financial situation. Thus, the following main structure is proposed:

(a) The group of members of the bureaux of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies (the "Group of 15"), the chairs of the working groups of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, and the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs together serve as the steering committee for the preparations for "UNISPACE+50";

(b) The sessions of the Committee, its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and its Legal Subcommittee in 2018 will not change in duration and format in connection with the "UNISPACE+50" agenda. There will be no additional cost for servicing those bodies in 2018;

(c) The Committee and its subsidiary bodies should address "UNISPACE+50" as the overarching theme under their respective agendas, and States members of the Committee and permanent observers of the Committee should be encouraged to address certain thematic priorities under "UNISPACE+50" to be agreed in the preparatory years 2015-2017;

(d) All Member States of the United Nations and the broader space community, including United Nations entities, other international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector, should be invited to participate in a dedicated commemorative segment of the Committee in June 2018;

(e) The report of the Committee to the General Assembly in 2018 could be labelled using the "UNISPACE+50" theme and a dedicated General Assembly resolution or declaration could be adopted in 2018; and

(f) The next report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system will be issued in 2016. It

could look into how United Nations system entities interact with each other and other stakeholders in supporting global governance of space activities. The report could serve as an input to the "UNISPACE+50" thematic cycle.

## III. Identifying thematic priorities under the overarching theme "fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space" and building synergies with the United Nations summits and conferences on global development

16. The Working Group of the Whole of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in 2015 agreed that the following cross-cutting topics could be considered in presenting the unique role of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the subsidiary bodies of the Committee (see A/AC.105/1088, annex I, para. 4):

(a) Governance, including the United Nations treaties and principles on outer space, guidelines adopted by the Committee and General Assembly resolutions on outer space;

(b) Capacity-building, including activities of States members of the Committee and permanent observers to the Committee, and work undertaken by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the regional centres on space science and technology education, affiliated to the United Nations;

(c) Resiliency, including matters related to the ability to depend on space systems and to respond to the impact of events such as adverse space weather;

(d) Interoperability, including work done by the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems and other coordination mechanisms;

(e) Space for sustainable development, including consideration of the contribution of the Committee to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (A/AC.105/993) and efforts by the Committee and its member States to meet global development goals.

17. Building upon those cross-cutting areas consideration should also be given to governance structures such as national spatial data infrastructures, national regulatory frameworks, international mechanisms for space cooperation and regional and interregional coordination mechanisms; to already established or potential new mechanisms and processes for resiliency and interoperability such as in the fields of disaster risk reduction and coordination of efforts relating to the near-Earth object impact threat; and to transparency and confidence-building measures and mechanisms for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities within the broader context of space security.

18. In the identification of a core set of thematic priorities, the work carried out by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies should be taken into account, including processes under related agenda items, the role of symposiums being held regularly during the sessions of the two Subcommittees in the period leading up to 2018, as well as the programme of work of the Office for Outer Space Affairs.

19. In addition, the High-Level Forum: Space as a Driver for Socioeconomic Sustainable Development, to be organized by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and hosted by the United Arab Emirates, and to be held from 15 to 17 November 2015 in Dubai, should be considered in this context. This will be the first in a series of three conferences leading up to "UNISPACE+50". It will address space economy, space society, space accessibility and space diplomacy.

20. The Working Group of the Whole also recommended that the objective and the main approach contained in A/AC.105/C.1/2015/CRP.15 should be consolidated with the preparatory work to be undertaken prior to the "UNISPACE+50" thematic cycle of the Committee.

21. In that context it could be useful to study the evolution of space activities over the past fifty years, in particular the increase of space activities and the associated development of national infrastructures in developing countries. Such a study would also be connected to the ongoing review of international mechanisms for cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space.

22. The Working Group of the Whole further agreed that the preparatory work for 2018 could benefit from the work of the expert group on space and global health and the proposed new thematic priority for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications: space technologies for monitoring and protecting biodiversity and ecosystems (A/AC.105/C.1/2015/CRP.31).

23. In this context, the special report of UN-Space on space for global health (A/AC.105/1091) prepared by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the Cartographic Section of the Department of Field Support and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, serves as a contribution to the work of the newly established expert groups of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on space and global health and on space weather, and for the preparations of the "UNISPACE+50" theme of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies.

24. Furthermore, the contributions in the special reports of UN-Space on new and emerging technologies, applications and initiatives for space-related inter-agency cooperation (A/AC.105/843), space benefits for Africa: contribution of the United Nations system (A/AC.105/941), use of space technology within the United Nations system to address climate change issues (A/AC.105/991), and space for agriculture development and food security (A/AC.105/1042), should also be considered.

25. The recent reports of the Secretary-General for the periods 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results (A/AC.105/1014 and A/AC.105/1063) should be assessed in the context of preparing the next report of the Secretary-General for the period 2016-2017, which will address the contribution of the United Nations system to global space governance, with the specific purpose of providing input to the "UNISPACE+50" theme.

26. In view of the suggestion by the Working Group of the Whole that the preparatory work for 2018 could benefit from the new thematic priority area on biodiversity and ecosystems, synergies with and benefits from other priority areas under the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and activities under the UN-SPIDER programme, could also be studied, as appropriate.

27. In building synergies with the global conferences held within the United Nations system and relevant to the work of the Committee and global space governance, the following milestone United Nations summits and conferences could be addressed, among others:

(a) The third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015, and its outcome document on a framework for disaster risk reduction for 2015-2030;

(b) The United Nations summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, to be held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015;

(c) The twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015.

28. The Committee and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at their respective sessions in 2016 and 2017, could discuss the outcomes of those summits and global conferences with a view to considering synergies with the overall work of the Committee, including on the future role of the Committee in meeting those goals.

29. The Committee, its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and its Legal Subcommittee, at their respective sessions in 2018, are to address "UNISPACE+50" as the overarching theme under their respective agendas, within the framework of the thematic priorities identified in 2016, and building upon the cross-cutting areas (see para. 16). In doing so, they are to take into consideration contributions by States members of the Committee and permanent observers of the Committee, contributions by UN-Space received through the Office, and contributions from other relevant conferences and activities addressing global space governance, such as the series of the High-Level Forum organized by the Office. In this overall context, the following could serve as general guidance for addressing the thematic priorities:

(a) The Committee, its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and its Legal Subcommittee, at their respective sessions in 2016, should identify and agree on thematic priorities for consideration under the "UNISPACE+50" thematic cycle;

(b) The Legal Subcommittee, in 2016, should identify proposals to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty in 2017, as well as the outcome of the Subcommittee's Working Group on the Review of International Mechanisms for Cooperation in the Peaceful Exploration and Use of Outer Space, in particular in view of the "UNISPACE+50" theme;

(c) The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee, at their respective sessions in 2017, should identify elements for consideration by the Committee in 2017, which would constitute the basis for the outcome of "UNISPACE+50".

## IV. Role of the Office for Outer Space Affairs

30. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/85, paragraph 16, recognized the central role of the Office for Outer Space Affairs in fostering capacity-building in

the use of space science and technology and their applications for the benefit of all countries, in particular developing countries, and urged all Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Programme on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in order to enhance the capacity of the Office to provide technical and legal advisory services in its priority thematic areas.

31. In this context, and in the lead-up to the "UNISPACE+50" thematic cycle, the unique role played by the Office in supporting the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies should be studied with a view to considering ways and means for strengthening the role of the Office within the United Nations system and the global space community.

32. As part of the preparations for the "UNISPACE+50" thematic cycle, the Office should:

(a) Establish mechanisms under the Trust Fund for receiving voluntary contributions in support of the Office's preparations for the "UNISPACE+50" thematic cycle of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies;

(b) Identify the modalities for the high-level event in 2018 to mark the "UNISPACE+50" anniversary, open to all States Members of the United Nations, as well as the option of dedicating the Monday and Tuesday ahead of the 2018 session of the Committee to a symposium involving intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders;

(c) Identify modalities for organizing a dedicated treaty event to be held during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty in 2017;

(d) Prepare a draft report for the session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to be held in 2016 in the form of a conference room paper providing an outline for the consolidation of A/AC.105/C.1/2015/CRP.15 with the "UNISPACE+50" theme and an overview of the evolution of space activities over the past fifty years, in particular the increase in space activities of developing countries. The main outcome of the three UNISPACE Conferences and the review of the implementation of UNISPACE III (UNISPACE III+5) should also be addressed. Upon further guidance by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies at their respective sessions in 2016, the report should be submitted in the six official languages of the United Nations to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in 2017;

(e) Prepare the report by the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system for the period 2016-2017 on the theme of contributions of the United Nations system to global space governance, for submission in the six official languages of the United Nations to the Committee in 2016;

(f) On the basis of the thematic priorities identified by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies in 2016, invite States members of the Committee and permanent observers of the Committee to submit their views on the basis of a questionnaire addressing those thematic priorities, for submission in the six official languages of the United Nations to the respective sessions of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies in 2017;

(g) Work closely with the Department of Public Information to promote "UNISPACE+50" globally, including setting up a dedicated web page containing an overview of the role of the three UNISPACE Conferences, the Office and the Committee, with supporting background documentation, links to historical documents, photos and other multimedia content; and

(h) Within its regular programme of work, align capacity-building activities with "UNISPACE+50" through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, UN-SPIDER, its capacity-building programme on space law, and, as appropriate, in cooperation with the regional centres on space science and technology education, affiliated to the United Nations.